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Book review

ABC of Medical Law, Lorraine Corfield, Ingrid Granne, William Latimer-Sayer Wiley-Blackwell. UK (2009). ISBN: 978-1-4051-7628-6

ABC of Medical Law is a handy reference for those working within any field of medicine. It comprises 12 chapters covering issues relevant to daily practice such as consent in adults and children, refusal of medical treatment, negligence and confidentiality, as well as more delicate issues of withholding and withdrawing life sustaining treatment, research, organ transplantation, organ retention, post-mortem examinations and the Human Rights Act.

The first chapter provides an incredibly useful explanation of the basic principles and terminology necessary to understand medical law. Each chapter gives an overview of the subject matter and provides references for further reading. Examples of cases and summaries in coloured boxes put the legal principles into context and aid reader understanding by clarifying the points made.

Understanding medical law is essential to daily practice and in a world where defensive medicine is practised more and more, increased knowledge of the legal system helps to alleviate concerns about litigation. With an appropriate level of detail, the authors review the important issues and define the boundaries of responsibility; both individual and that of the hospital trusts. This is an

organised and concise text whose consistent logical layout makes it easy to access the information needed without having to read the entire book. Links to the GMC guidance emphasise the relevance of the content to daily practice and the relatable situations described highlight the importance of seeking legal advice in difficult cases.

Although a valuable reference, currently this book is only really suitable for use at home. It would further benefit its target audience by being available as a pocket guide or internet phone 'app' for more practical access on the wards.

I would recommend this book to all junior doctors as an essential reference tool for understanding the basics of medical law and aiding the delivery of best patient care within the constraints of the law. Although the target audience is GPs, junior doctors and those in primary care, I think this book is actually a fundamental guide for all levels from medical student to consultant and anyone with an interest in medical law.

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